WATER 2025 LONG-RANGE WATER SERVICE PLAN

Draft

Fundamental Water Service Policies

prepared by the

Albuquerque Public Works Department

for the

Albuquerque Metropolitan Area Water and Wastewater Board

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GLOSSARY

Adopted policies – The entire collection of policies, procedures, ordinances, etc. applicable to a subject matter that have been adopted by an entity with jurisdiction over the matter.

Board -- The Water and Wastewater Board created by a Joint Powers Agreement between the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque.

Domestic water – Water for generally indoor uses such as drinking, washing, and sanitary uses; it excludes uses like outdoor lawn irrigation.

Extension – Any addition to the water system other than a service line connection.

Land-use designation – Definition of the intended or allowable purpose of an area, tract, or parcel of land; includes both planning and zoning statements and maps.

Potable water – Water which is intended for drinking.

Stakeholder – An individual or group that has an interest in an action because of the potential to be impacted (positively or negatively) by decisions that are made.

Sustainability – As used in the context of a sustainable water supply, sustainability is the concept of use and management of water resources today so as not to limit the choices and opportunities for future generations with regard to those water resources.

The Utility - The organizational entity and assets overseen by the Board that provides water supplies and service to Albuquerque and surrounding areas.

Utility extension charge (UEC) - One-time fees paid by new water or sewer customers as a way to recover part or all of the construction cost of facilities providing system capacity for their use.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The function of the Utility is to provide sustainable, quality water service in a reliable, responsive, and efficient manner. The 1999 Joint Powers Agreement provides that the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area Water and Wastewater Board shall have authority to create water service policy. This document, *Fundamental Water Service Policies*, is designed to serve as a statement of many of the principal policies governing water service provision by the Utility. It defines basic policies that guide decision-making and identifies the general direction the Utility will take to provide customer-focused service.

This document reinforces some current practices by documenting them as policies, eliminates or replaces some policies that are no longer appropriate, and creates some new policies.

"Water service" encompasses all the tasks involved in obtaining and delivering sustainable, quality water to customers. This covers a broad range of activities from identifying, protecting, and developing sources of supply to facilities planning, construction and maintenance, water quality compliance, system operations, customer interaction, and financial management.

Several major plans addressing some of these issues already exist, such as the *Water Resources Management Strategy* (which focuses on water supply) and the *Water Conservation Management Strategy* (which focuses on conservation policies and reducing water demand). The *Fundamental Water Service Policies* encompass those concepts but does not duplicate the content of those and other similar documents. Similarly, many of the technical and administrative provisions that are necessary for consistent application of the water service policies included in this document are itemized elsewhere. These include such documents as the Rate Ordinance, the Development Review Manual, and various technical specifications. Most of these documents will require some modification as a result of adoption of the *Fundamental Water Service Policies*.

BACKGROUND

Why Is A Fundamental Policies Document Needed?

The basic policies that have guided the City of Albuquerque's decision-making about water have evolved gradually over the past 50 years. Gradual evolution has been possible because although the system grew in size, it remained basically the same. Ground water has been our

sole source of supply and, despite growth, the system provided only one kind of service to all customers. Moreover, Albuquerque was able to operate independently from neighboring jurisdictions, which had small and geographically separate populations.

Today, we are on the threshold of major changes that are creating a break from the past. The Utility is entering a more complex and challenging environment that requires reconsideration of previous policies and practices and development of a new approach appropriate for the coming decades. Some of the key changes we must deal with are discussed below.

A change in sources of water supply

Prior to the early 1990s, it was widely believed that Albuquerque had an inexhaustible supply of ground water. Water service planning was based on that assumption, although even then some steps were taken to assure an alternate source of supply for the future. Eventually, signs began to appear that the local aquifer could not sustain the demands being placed on it, and the Utility formulated initiatives to address the problem.

Several major water initiatives have been launched in the past decade to address the implications of finding that water supplies are not unlimited.

- The *Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Ground-Water Protection Policy and Action Plan* (1993-1994) put in place a regional effort to protect our precious ground water supplies from contamination.
- The *Albuquerque Water Conservation Management Strategy* (1995) established a combination of regulatory and voluntary measures that represent a new paradigm for the Utility's customers: one of viewing water as a resource to be conservatively managed and used.
- The *Albuquerque Water Resources Management Strategy* (1997) identified what is required to shift away from reliance on ground water alone and move toward a sustainable supply by diversifying water sources to include ground water, surface water, and recycled water from industry and treated wastewater.

These changes bring with them a broad range of new regulatory, technological, and operational challenges. In effect, Albuquerque will need a "new" Utility equipped to perform a much broader and more complex range of tasks as these changes take effect.

A ten-fold population increase (1950-2050)

Early in the 20th century, Albuquerque officials recognized water service as a critical community function and acquired the water system, which had been owned by a private operator. By 1950, the City of Albuquerque had a population of 97,000. A post-war boom was beginning. In 1952, a Master Plan for water service was developed. The plan forecast the need to serve 368,000 people by the then-distant year 2000.

Today, the Utility serves over 460,000 customers. Population in Bernalillo County west of the Sandia Mountains is expected to more than double to 960,000 in the next 50 years. The four-county Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments area is projected to have a population of more than 1.5 million by 2050.

A large percentage of this population increase is projected to come from the existing population as our children grow to adulthood and raise their own families in the community. People moving to the Albuquerque metropolitan area from other parts of New Mexico to take advantage of job opportunities will comprise another part of the increase as will people moving to Albuquerque from out of state. Whatever the cause of our growth, the fact is that we are growing. The Albuquerque metropolitan area no longer covers just a small part of Bernalillo County. It now extends into neighboring counties and includes other cities, such as Rio Rancho (population: 50,000); smaller communities, like Los Ranchos de Albuquerque, Corrales, and Tijeras; and large unincorporated areas, such as the South Valley and the East Mountains. Although some people believe Albuquerque is already big enough, limiting growth within the boundaries of the City or even the County will not stop growth of the metropolitan area. We must prepare to deal with a larger population in ways that preserve our quality of life and the sustainability of our resources.

Growth, especially at the high rates experienced in recent years, requires that new methods and approaches be taken to ensure the reliability, safety and quality of water supplies and service. Albuquerque's Water Utility has reached the point that small incremental changes to policy are no longer adequate. Revamping major policies is required to enable the Utility to operate on a new, more sustainable basis.

Customers demand a higher level of service

With each passing day, people are demanding more choice in their water service as they are in other areas of their lives. Citizens also want water that meets increasingly stringent standards of quality but do not necessarily expect to pay more for it. More stringent standards and more choice mean that all across the United States water customers have had and will continue to have a larger bill to pay for water service.

Although government control is generally viewed as undesirable, citizens are demanding government action to preserve the environment and agricultural lands as well as to ensure a healthy economy, the sustainability of water supplies, and an ever better quality of life.

Some past policies governing the level of water service must be adjusted to enable the Utility to satisfy its water customers in this atmosphere of rising expectations and fiscal constraints.

How These Policies Were Developed

These policies represent the ideas and opinions of stakeholders from the entire region and beyond. An extensive outreach and listening process has taken place to assure that varied interests were heard. These efforts included the following:

- Conventional focus groups with both community/environmental activists and development interests
- Direct mailing to a broad spectrum of interests
- Multiple briefings of elected and appointed officials and boards
- Presentations to neighborhood associations and coalitions throughout the City and County
- Periodic meetings with other water providers in the region
- Television, radio, and newspaper interviews
- A bilingual information line
- An interactive Internet web site

One highlight event was a Neighborhood Forum where representatives of more than 45 neighborhood associations heard an overview of the issues and interest-group perspectives and discussed the issues in workshop sessions. This group completed a survey both before and after the Forum that provided information on their views.

In addition to this extensive community involvement, development of the water service policies included research of local policies and interviewing other major southwestern utilities. A steering committee of senior staff from City and County departments provided guidance and perspective throughout the process. The project consultant team included individuals knowledgeable about the local situation and national experts familiar with how other utilities have dealt with these issues.

In the summer of 2000, a Working Group representing a broad cross-section of the community dedicated many hours to working with their respective constituencies and the project team to refine the drafts of this document to reflect all the perspectives expressed throughout the two-year development process.

A broad spectrum of opinion exists on these issues, and no two people have exactly the same position about them. The policies in this document are written to address these issues from a standpoint that avoids the extremes of opinion and reflects the common values expressed. In doing so it represents the informed consensus of the community.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT RECOMMENDATION

Historically there have been "disconnects" in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County between land-use planning decisions and decisions about when and where to extend water service. Development plans have sometimes been approved far in advance of any specific plans to extend water service. This has created two undesirable outcomes: (1) the Utility has been called on to extend service in a less-than-optimal manner; and (2) developers faced a great deal of risk and uncertainty about the timing and costs of water service for their projects.

However, because water service is a key element in all land-use planning decisions, decisions about water should be made in the course of the land-use planning process, regardless of what body has the authority to make these decisions. This recommendation for a change in timing is a significant change from past practice; but it streamlines the planning process, is fairer to developers, increases the accountability of decision makers, and allows implementation of *Comprehensive Plan* policy directives to provide a safe and sustainable water supply.

In addition, because water service is an essential and integral element in any development plan, the decision regarding whether the Utility will provide water service should occur at or near the same time as land-use planning designation. The recommended *Comprehensive Plan* amendment directs this change in the timing of decisions on water service extension.

While the Board does not have the authority to amend the *Comprehensive Plan,* it strongly recommends to the Bernalillo County Commission and the Albuquerque City Council that the change specified below be adopted. Only by integrating the timing of land use and water service planning processes can both land-use planning and water service reflect the goals of and priorities of the City and the County.

The Board does <u>not</u> recommend changing the assignment of authority for making water service extension decisions.

The Board recommends that the following statement be adopted as an amendment to the *Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan*:

> **"Water service provision and timing decisions shall be integrated with land-use approval processes.**
>
> The land-use approval processes include, but are not limited to, consideration by the Planning Commissions, the Extraterritorial Land Use Commission, the Development Review agencies, and in many cases the City/County/Village governing bodies, and Extraterritorrial Land Use Authority. This statement is intended to assure that all land-use planning and decisions explicitly consider both the availability of water and the prospects for water service."

FUNDAMENTAL WATER SERVICE POLICIES

These *Fundamental Water Service Policies* are adopted to assure that current and future Utility customers receive equitable consideration in water service matters, and to define and ensure the consistency of the philosophy guiding water service decisions.

Many other documents embody the specific programs, technical definitions, and procedural details needed to accomplish these policy statements.

The policy statements and the accompanying rationale should be read together. The policy statement succinctly presents the position being taken on a matter. However, because few matters are not without "gray" areas, the rationale presents specifics, clarifications, expansion, and examples to make the intent more understandable. The rationale also contains reasons for taking the position stated.

This document is written under the assumption that the Utility will continue to be an enterprise organization, that is, that it will raise all the revenue it needs from its own ratepayers without subsidies from the General Funds of the City or County, and that it is not intended to serve as a means of taxation. Thus, there is a distinction between "ratepayers" and "taxpayers" since the Utility operates solely on revenues generated by its customers not on property tax funding. At the same time, the broad and comprehensive reach of water service means that the whole community--and not ratepayers alone--are affected by the Utility's ability to fulfill its mission.

Stakeholder Communications

Among the many implications of the rapid pace of change is the need for much greater public understanding of and involvement in Utility issues, as well as greater understanding by the Utility of the public's concerns. In addition, many more demands will be placed on employees to adapt to new tasks and a changing organization.

A. Maintain a firm commitment to informing and listening to stakeholders regarding water system needs and issues.

A.1. Communications programs with customers, employees, and other stakeholders shall be improved and maintained.

RATIONALE: Rising rates, new water supply sources, EPA-mandated reporting, new arsenic regulations, and many other factors are increasing ratepayer concern about water issues. Successful citizen participation in conservation programs, water resources strategy formulation, and other water activities has set the stage for successful communications efforts.

This policy calls for the Utility to proactively establish mechanisms to ensure effective communications among water system stakeholders as a vital and integral part of management responsibilities. Specific programs and periodic reporting will be maintained for customer communications with such groups as the media, ratepayers, regulatory authorities, community leaders, and neighboring jurisdictions. The types of activities required to implement this policy include establishing an on-going and comprehensive employee communications program and outreach programs and materials.

A.2. Customer satisfaction shall be measured on a regular basis.

RATIONALE: Customer satisfaction is the most meaningful measure of achievement of the goal of being the preferred service provider. There is a continuing need to determine the concerns and desires of ratepayers. Establishing routine measures of customer perceptions and expectations will help provide the information needed to evaluate Utility achievement of its goals.

A.3 A Water Advisory Commission made up of stakeholder representatives, including regional participants, shall be established and maintained.

RATIONALE: Maintaining a Water Advisory Commission comprised of individuals representing a full spectrum of ratepayer interests and representatives of interests outside the served area will provide insight into customer needs and expectations.

There has been a proliferation of citizen water committees as each new project creates a group to obtain the degree of interaction necessary for project understanding and acceptance. The Water Advisory Commission is envisioned as functioning in an advisory capacity similar to the Indicators Progress Commission and not in a regulatory manner like the Environmental Planning Commission and being constituted initially of representatives from existing committees to draw on expertise already developed and to coordinate efforts. The intent is to maintain a meaningful channel of ongoing public education and participation. Drawing on the existing Water Resources Customers Advisory Committee, the Ground Water Protection Advisory Board, the Rio Grande Water Assembly, and others will provide continuity and a streamlined approach.

A.4. A report on the Utility, including progress toward implementation of the policies set forth in this document, shall be prepared and made available on an annual basis.

RATIONALE: Albuquerque has set goals for the community including goals for the Utility. In keeping with sound management practice, a regular review of progress toward stated goals is needed to assist in recognizing both advances and roadblocks, as well as in setting priorities each year. Having summary information readily available can enhance customer understanding and confidence in the Utility.

Regional Service Provision

Addressing the water needs of all citizens for both public health and resource management reasons requires that we adopt a more regional approach. The better water service throughout the region is coordinated, the more options for achieving sustainability become available. These policies create a basis for more regional action.

B. Facilitate water service provision throughout the region.

B.1. Water service in the metropolitan area shall be extended by the Utility consistent with adopted policies.

RATIONALE: Water service extension has not always served to support land-use planning as it should. A question that permeated discussions on fundamental water service policies was what is the proper role and timing of water service decisions in land-use decision making? The perspective taken is that water service provision is just one of many facets that go into determining the desired shape of the community. Water service provision must be considered carefully in arriving at the larger land use decision. The recommended Comprehensive Plan *amendment addresses the need for synchronizing the timing of land-use and water decisions. This policy addresses achieving consistency with land-use planning.*

One purpose of this policy is to establish that extension of the water system within the region comes with conditions, i.e., it must be consistent with adopted policies. A second purpose is to make it clear that, if compliance with those policies is assured, water service will be extended. Water service extension will not be used to approve, disapprove, or delay development. Instead the land-use planning and zoning process will fulfill this function.

The Comprehensive Plan *policies for land use, supplemented by other major planning documents adopted by elected officials, determine the appropriate locations and densities of development throughout Bernalillo County.*

Everyone requesting service will have to comply with policies regarding land use, water supply sustainability, and other policies in this and other documents.

Established procedures for approving new development (subdivision agreements, development agreements, and other methods for determining capital improvements needs and financial responsibility) will continue to be followed.

All those desiring service should know in advance the conditions for obtaining service. When those requirements are met, there will be no question of approval of water service extension.

B.2. Annexation into the City of Albuquerque as a condition of water service extension shall be required only when in conformance with State statute and based on adopted annexation policies.

RATIONALE: The Utility has become a distinctly regional enterprise with the extension of service beyond the Albuquerque city limits. As the Utility works to achieve greater regional coordination and planning for water resources management, annexation as a requirement for water service could become a stumbling block. State statute prohibits forcing anyone "to agree to annexation as a condition of extending sewer and water service…if…extension is paid for all or in part by federal, state or county money."(§ 3-7-17.1, NMSA 1978) Water system extension decisions need to be made in the context of regional decisions regarding land use and water sustainability rather than purely on the basis of jurisdictional boundaries. Annexation decisions will be based on appropriate planning criteria such as the Albuquerque Annexation Policies *(R-68, adopted May 25, 1990).*

B.3. The size of facilities and scale of service shall be consistent with adopted land-use plans.

RATIONALE: Land-use designation provides the basis for sizing facilities and service. Utility services will be designed to match designated land uses and density provisions. It is important to note that if the land use is changed after the facilities are built, major costs could be incurred if an increase in capacity is desired, or some expensive facilities would not be fully used if a decrease in density occurs. The scale of water service to be provided and the technical, financial, and managerial responsibilities for its provision should be stated in the land use documents and followed in water service delivery.

The following three "scales of service" are presently being discussed. Other scales of service might be defined. While the water delivered would meet the same quality standards, some other factors would be different.

- ***Urban-scale service** would provide for substantial reliability and capacity—very much as the system does today. This means provision for high-density housing, intensive commercial or industrial demands, and fire insurance flow rating near the best available (Insurance Services Office class 3; 3,500 gallons per minute or more).*
- ***Suburban-scale service** balances lower density and light commercial demands with smaller/fewer facilities that cost less. Consequences might be more obvious pressure variations, more noticeable supply interruptions during maintenance, and fire protection similar to present County standards (1,000 to 1,500 gallons per minute).*
- ***Rural-scale service** would provide only for essential domestic water services. As with rural development today in some unincorporated parts of Bernalillo County, the water system would not provide for fighting fires.*

Establishing suburban and rural service levels will reduce the capital costs of extending service to areas that are not intended to develop to urban densities,

thereby making it more feasible to extend service. In addition, these service levels inhibit density changes and foster a more stable land use pattern because of the high costs of retrofitting.

B.4. Incentives shall be developed to encourage and facilitate connection within the system's existing service area.

RATIONALE: This policy is designed to focus attention on potential incentives for infill development, as well as on seeking ways to encourage existing water users within the service area to connect to the water system. One example (stated in the Water Resources Management Strategy) is supporting continued use of existing shallow wells for irrigation purposes following connection to the Utility for household service.

As a matter of resource management, it is important to encourage connection of existing and newly developed properties within the area served. Using more of the available infrastructure within the established area would also assure clean water supplies and result in economies of scale.

In many cases, affordability is a major issue for potential customers. This policy implies the Utility will seek funding or programs to assist those who could not otherwise afford to connect.

It is equally important to take steps to prevent disconnection from the system.

B.5. Extension of service outside of Bernalillo County shall only be made upon request of elected officials of the area requesting service and then only under conditions that apply to extension within Bernalillo County.

RATIONALE: Extension of Utility service beyond Bernalillo County has already been requested and additional requests are likely. These should be accepted in the spirit of regionalism, but with caution. To minimize inter-county conflict, it is critical that the request be supported by that area's governing bodies.

In addition, it is only fair that the areas meet the same conditions for service extension that apply throughout the Utility's service area, such as being

consistent with approved land-use policy and not imposing increased costs on current Utility ratepayers.

B.6. Any areas outside of the Bernalillo County portion of the Albuquerque Ground Water Basin desiring service must provide for the renewable water supplies and valid water rights needed to serve them.

RATIONALE: Regional demand for water in the area surrounding Albuquerque could result in demand for inter-basin transfers of water. Present Utility customers have made the commitment to pay more for water so that they can develop and maintain a sustainable supply. They should not also bear the burden of paying the additional costs of acquiring water rights to serve areas that have failed to make an early commitment to sustainability.

The Water Resources Management Strategy *adopted by the City of Albuquerque in 1997 based its sustainability on service to the area underlain by the aquifer within Bernalillo County. (This is the part of Bernalillo County bounded by the Rio Puerco on the west and the west side of the Sandia Mountains on the east.) It recognized that additional water rights and water supplies must be obtained to serve this area.*

While service should not be denied to entities outside this area, as a matter of fairness, applicants for service should defray the added costs of bringing renewable water and water rights into the system from outside the Albuquerque Groundwater Basin in Bernalillo County if they choose to be served. This "new" water could be provided through assignment of water and rights or cash in-lieu-of such. If the latter, all costs of acquiring additional water at the then-current price would be paid by the newly served areas. This might require newly served areas to make a "down payment" with the understanding that the full costs (including administrative costs) would be calculated after the water transactions are completed, and an additional amount to cover the full costs could then be due.

B.7. Water service shall only be provided in conjunction with sewer service.

RATIONALE: The Ground-Water Protection Policy and Action Plan *documents the concerns about contamination of our ground water supply due to human actions. Local history shows how well-intentioned provision of water to meet one health concern has ultimately led to creation of other health problems and water contamination. The Utility must take action to prevent continuing these unintended consequences while still providing for the needs of special areas. Thus, water service must only be provided in conjunction with sewer service unless water service extension alone will not lead to ground water contamination problems.*

Level of Service

Today's customers demand a high level of service in addition to simple water availability. Level of service policies address the factors critical to customer satisfaction.

C. Provide a level of service that results in the Utility becoming the preferred water provider in the region.

C.1. Adequate water supplies shall be delivered consistent with adopted policies and the mandate of preserving a sustainable water supply.

RATIONALE: This commitment to providing adequate supplies supports the health of the local economy, our quality of life, and the diversity of our culture and activities. This policy recognizes that water supplies in the metropolitan area are not limitless. As discussed in detail in the Water Resources Management Strategy *and its supporting documents, the presently available supply cannot support the projected 2050 population at the assumed usage rates.*

This policy reiterates the Water Resources Management Strategy's *commitment to locate, develop, and secure sufficient water to meet the needs of all customers. It recognizes that water resources must be protected and sustainably managed to provide for both the present and the long-term supply. It further recognizes that there is a need to aggressively conserve water and that, in spite of all efforts taken, there may be times when circumstances require temporary limitations on water use. Conservation measures are in place today; however, drought management guidelines for both supply and use of water must still be prepared and adopted.*

C.2. Consistently clear, good-tasting drinking water that meets customer expectations and federal and state water quality requirements shall be provided.

RATIONALE: Customers have endorsed maintaining high water quality standards for both aesthetic and public health reasons, despite the somewhat higher costs involved. It is incumbent on the Utility to anticipate and plan for new regulations and to meet customer expectations. Anticipating and meeting

increasingly stringent federal and state regulatory standards will require major investment in additional treatment (e.g., for arsenic removal).

Customers have almost universally stated that they expect their water quality to go beyond just meeting the regulations. They also want aesthetic concerns like taste and color to be addressed. As river water supplies are introduced into the drinking water system, the challenges of consistently maintaining water quality similar to what customers have come to expect from Albuquerque's ground-water-only system will be substantial.

C.3. Working water pressures shall be maintained within safe and reasonable limits.

RATIONALE: This policy will foster a more reliable water system for all customers by assuring that water pressure is maintained within a defined range and by defining the point at which pressure will be measured, e.g., at the meter. Supplemental pumping or pressure reduction outside the accepted pressure range would be available to customers as an optional additional-cost service.

This requires reconciling one current Albuquerque Building Code provision concerning the allowable maximum water pressure and adopting and strictly enforcing engineering standards. It also implies planning, scheduling, and funding corrective measures in some areas. The need to make pressure changes is inevitable. Implementation must proceed with adequate advance notice and advice to existing customers.

C.4. Standards of service reliability shall be defined and maintained.

RATIONALE: The Utility has traditionally built some redundancy and extra capacity into facilities to help ensure uninterrupted and unrestricted service when some facilities are out of service or when extremely adverse conditions or events arise. Some customers have questioned the need for the degree of reliability currently being provided.

This policy contemplates developing detailed reliability criteria similar to the situation with storm water management where facility sizing is based on the probability of a certain size storm occurring.

Some examples of this might include:

Design for only adequate capability to meet maximum-day demand 95 percent of the time assuming consumption rates of 175 gallons per person per day.

Design for only one major fire (6 hours at 6,000 gallons per minute) coincident with the peak day demand - instead of for 23 simultaneous major fires.

Competitiveness

The same techniques used by American manufacturers during the past decade to compete globally and reduce the cost and improve the quality of its goods and services are now being applied by water utilities nationwide. Competitiveness is the implementation of technology, work practices, and organizational strategy to improve the cost effectiveness of water service for the benefit of all customers.

Encouraging implementation of such competitive techniques is intended to achieve improved service and lower costs, while maintaining the safety and sustainability of the water supply and protection of public health as the Utility's top priority.

D. Organize and operate the Utility in a competitive manner.

D.1. The water and wastewater functions shall be organized into a single, separate department.

RATIONALE: Core water utility functions include supply and availability, operations and maintenance, conservation, development standard-setting and project review, customer service and billing, and finance. Nationally recognized experts who participated in policy formulation stressed the increasing importance of a highly integrated, utility-focused organization.

The need for this policy has also been pointed out as an issue by developers due to their experience with inconsistencies and delays in the development review process. Spiraling demands for specialized knowledge of regulatory, water rights, engineering, and other functions place a premium on using highly qualified personnel efficiently under specialized management.

D.2. Technologies that ensure appropriate reliability, automate processes to reduce costs, and improve overall water management and customer service shall be implemented.

RATIONALE: Application of appropriate new technology is a proven and necessary method of reducing costs and improving service. This policy represents a commitment to seeking out, funding, and implementing technologies that maintain competitiveness and the ability to provide quality service. This includes the areas of information technology, instrumentation, and process

control. Implementation of this policy will draw on the definition of appropriate standards of service reliability referred to in a preceeding policy.

D.3. Work practices shall be continuously improved to enhance long-term efficiency.

RATIONALE: This raises to a policy level the Utility's long-term commitment to aggressively pursue enhanced efficiency. The Utility is committed to adopting new work practices that improve efficiency. Examples include more consistent preventive maintenance, predictive maintenance techniques, cross training to increase personnel flexibility, and incentives to increase teamwork and initiative. The Albuquerque Water Operations Management System is the vehicle for implementing this policy.

D.4. Competitive pricing and service quality in delivering a reliable and sustainable water supply shall be maintained.

RATIONALE: The concept of competitiveness relates to two aspects. The Utility must maintain a competitive position relative to other cities in the Southwest. The Utility's performance must be comparable to the best public and private water service providers. In both of these efforts to control expenses, the quality of service must be maintained to the standards set forth in other policies in this document.

Financial

As the costs of water service increase, it is critical that prudent and equitable policies regarding revenues and expenditures be explicitly defined.

E. The Utility shall operate on a sound and equitable fiscal basis.

E.1. The Utility shall be operated as a self-sustaining Enterprise Fund and shall generate revenues sufficient to pay its costs.

RATIONALE: Continued operation of the Utility as an independent Enterprise Fund encourages efficient management and is consistent with cost-of-service principles. This policy urges careful analysis of trade-offs between debt and cash financing, as well as other financing options. Rates will not be held at artificially low levels, and a clear assessment of revenue needs will be made.

E.2. Budgeting and rate structures shall include adequate revenue to provide for timely long-term system maintenance and rehabilitation as well as necessary infrastructure development.

RATIONALE: Fiscal responsibility demands developing and maintaining a funded program of preventive maintenance and facilities rehabilitation that assures reliable system performance at the lowest life-cycle costs. The Albuquerque Mayor and Council have made a commitment to remedying the large backlog of maintenance and rehabilitation needs that have accumulated. This policy underscores and makes permanent that commitment on the part of the Board.

The Utility will need to revise and continue to implement the long-term system rehabilitation action and funding plan under this policy.

E.3. The Utility shall establish mechanisms to minimize adverse impacts of year-to-year revenue fluctuations.

RATIONALE: Year-to-year variations in water sales due to conservation and weather changes can lead to major fluctuations in revenue that hamper efficient Utility management. The Utility will need to develop methods such as a rate

stabilization fund, a reserve fund, or using a base use averaged over several years to avoid adverse effects of those fluctuations.

E.4. The water rate structure for potable water shall not differentiate on the basis of jurisdictional boundaries or water sources but may provide for differentiating rates to equitably cover the costs associated with building and operating new infrastructure, acquiring water rights and supplies, or accounting for differences in the costs to serve specific areas or customer classifications.

RATIONALE: To encourage broad support and participation in a regional approach to water management, the rate structure must reflect a commitment to equitable treatment for all customers, regardless of the jurisdiction in which they reside. In addition, the policy of being the preferred water provider implies an inclusive approach.

As treated river water is integrated into the drinking water supply, all water users benefit from additions to the water supply. In addition, ground water and river water will be blended throughout the system and the proportion of river and ground water used will vary from season to season. Thus, differentiating charges between the two types of water is impractical.

This policy does not exclude the possibility of differentiating rates to equitably cover the costs associated with building and operating infrastructure or acquisition of additional water rights and supplies for specific areas. Nor does it exclude applying accepted cost-of-service principles that use approved means to determine the various costs of system infrastructure and operation attributable to defined customer "classes" or types.

E.5. The costs of extending water service to new customers shall be borne by the customers receiving the service.

RATIONALE: The Utility has a basic responsibility to maintain its existing system and to serve existing customers fully. It also has a responsibility to extend service to new customers in an orderly, cost-effective, and fiscally responsible manner. This policy means that new customers requesting service would pay for system improvements needed to serve them, as is generally the case today.

New Utility customers pay for the necessary construction directly or through the Utility Extension Charge (UEC). In many cases, developers are an intermediary of new customers. Developers' money will be at risk rather than ratepayers' money. In most cases, they will front the funds necessary for construction (e.g., main lines and major facilities) and be reimbursed from a portion of the Utility Extension Charge (UEC) as it is collected. Reimbursement for improvements from future UEC will be made in accordance with the provisions of the Line Extension Policies. This strategy allows new customers to obtain service, development to be responsive to market conditions, and the Utility to focus funding on its highest priorities. It establishes one existing policy option as the usual method of funding system extension.

Phasing of water service extension and financial responsibilities will be determined through the development agreement process. All expenditures must take into account anticipated impacts on the entire system. Therefore, they must be within the framework of an adopted Water System Master Plan.

E.6. Incentives and other means to encourage continued water conservation and water reclamation/recycling shall be provided.

RATIONALE: Conservation and recycling benefit the entire region by helping to reduce or delay the need for expensive new supplies and by preserving high quality ground water supplies.

Initial conservation efforts have achieved major savings, but Utility customers are still striving to meet the goal of reducing per-capita water use by 30 percent. In the coming decades, additional reductions may be possible and needed. Consultation with the public found overwhelming support for strong financial incentives for conservation, such as steeply inverted block rates. Other water systems have found that rate incentives generate additional conservation gains.

As the Utility puts its first water recycling systems into service in the year 2000, rate and other incentives will be needed to encourage use that creates beneficial economies of scale.

Administrative Consistency

All rules should be easily accessible to affected parties and should be consistently applied. Many years of ad hoc growth and use of unwritten policies has led to a need for renewed commitment and new procedures for ensuring consistency.

F. Ensure consistent, coordinated, and efficient application of adopted policies.

F.1. A comprehensive policies and procedures reference shall be established and maintained.

RATIONALE: The Utility must undertake a sustained, dedicated effort to consolidate all its water policies and procedures in a central, comprehensive and readily accessible reference. This reference should serve to assure fair and consistent reviews and allow coordination of Utility decisions with other adopted community goals and policies. Improved use of information tools should enhance the Utility's ability to keep the reference current.

F.2. The process for Utility review and input into projects that affect Utility operations shall be strengthened and streamlined.

RATIONALE: The City's current project review process is fragmented and often fails to take into account the needs, plans, standards, and perspectives of the Utility when water issues are clearly involved. For example, Utility requirements are not always included in projects approved by the Development Review Board or the Design Review Committee. This leads to both construction of inadequate system configuration (with increased cost burden to current ratepayers) and delays during construction (with increased costs to developers). Previous links in the review process that helped to minimize problems have not been maintained. This may be related to the lack of focus noted in the rationale for policy C.3. Some other utilities actually prepare system design drawings for applicants for a fee. As a minimum, the Utility should explore the steps in the process with a goal of reducing the duration and complexity of reviews.

The Utility should participate in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan *and other major planning documents because an assessment of water*

availability will foster sustainable development, streamline the decision-making process, and provide greater certainty to developers.

F.3. A Master Plan, design standards and specifications, and the corresponding documentation shall be maintained up-to-date.

RATIONALE: The Utility is handicapped by the current lack of updated and agreed upon Master Plans, Design Manuals, and Technical Specifications. This policy requires their frequent review and update, which is necessary to avoid legal and system operations problems.

The standards and requirements set forth in these documents should be coordinated and consolidated into a concise, comprehensive set of information. The Utility will have the responsibility of assuring that these standards and requirements are updated through the standards review (Design Review Board) process in response to changing technology and water service needs.

F.4. Water planning programs shall be developed, adopted, and implemented.

RATIONALE: Water planning programs (e.g., Ground Water Protection, Water Conservation, and Water Resources Management) represent key responsibilities and activities of the Utility. They must be implemented in an efficient, coordinated manner to enable the Utility to do its job. Other similar efforts will need to be developed over time as major new issues are identified. This policy directs that the need for such programs be brought to the attention of the Water Advisory Commission and the Board for their action.

IMPLEMENTATION

By their very nature, the fundamental policies outlined in this document are general so that the concepts remain applicable over many years. However, many of the policies call for specific programs, technical definitions, and procedural details to be developed to further implementation of the policy statements. Many involved in the development of these policies commented that they must be implemented promptly to be useful.

Ideally, the transition to a "new" Utility equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century would occur overnight, and the many components the transition entails would be put into place simultaneously. The magnitude and complexity of the task, however, means it must happen over time.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Utility's transition began a decade ago. The results of those efforts include action programs such as the Ground-Water Protection Policy and Action Plan, the Water Resources Management Strategy, and the Conservation Program, which are all now into the implementation phase. The *Fundamental Water Service Policies* both provide a policy framework compatible with those previous efforts and address aspects of water service—such as the conditions that will apply to extending service to new areas—not addressed earlier.

The fundamental policies comprise a broad umbrella of considerations and imply additional activities and development of new tools and methods. This section outlines some of the high-priority activities that are in progress or have been identified as requiring urgent attention. A comprehensive list of tasks was developed as one of the work products of the policies planning project.

A broad overview of implementation needs are outlined below. The schedule and budget for accomplishing these tasks is set on an annual basis and will require the ongoing input and support of elected officials and the public. Appendix II provides a list of some actions and a general time schedule for their accomplishment. The needs identified generally fall into three broad categories:

- Completion of efforts now in progress
- Organization and operating changes
- New initiatives

Completion of Efforts Now In Progress

Ground-Water Protection and Conservation

Continue and enhance support for these critical programs. Many implementation aspects of the *Ground-Water Protection Policy and Action Plan* remain to be carried out. Conservation efforts have been extremely successful to date, but have not yet reached vitally important long-term goals.

Water Resources Strategy Implementation

This program to make use of the City's San Juan-Chama water, recycle water and implement new technologies to improve water management must continue to move forward on schedule, despite the challenges posed by endangered species and other controversies.

One critical aspect now in progress related to master planning is the creation of a Drought Management Plan. Among other measures, this plan would define trigger points for instituting voluntary and/or mandatory measures (e.g., once a week lawn watering rules) to reduce overall water use during drought periods.

Albuquerque Water Operations Management System (AWOMS) Implementation

Complete implementation of this project, which is re-engineering Utility operations and includes instituting a new Computerized Maintenance Management System, as well as major changes in work practices to improve competitiveness and customer satisfaction.

Master Planning

Complete development of technical tools (e.g., computer models) and the technical criteria and manuals governing specifications necessary to prepare a Water Master Plan. This includes setting appropriate criteria for water pressures, reliability and scale of service, among other aspects.

This is a hybrid of existing and new efforts. While some technical manuals have been drafted and are now under review and the computer model of the water system and its connection to the City's Geographic Information System (GIS) are near completion, new funds must be obtained for the next steps that will involve formulating the Master Plan itself.

Organization and Operating Changes

Implement two key policies to enhance the accountability of the Utility and provide guidance in direction toward the new vision.

- Create a separate Water and Wastewater Department
- Establish a Water Advisory Commission

New Initiatives for Improved Communications

Develop mechanisms to improve communications with ratepayers, foster more regional consideration of water management and enhance Water Utility accountability.

Several specific needs have been identified in this regard, including:

- Conducting the first stakeholder survey to establish baseline information.
- Establish communications mechanisms to ensure that requirements and when they take effect are known well in advance.
- Create the means for regular, ongoing dialog with neighboring utilities.
- Issuing the first Water and Wastewater Utility Annual Report.

New Finance-Related Initiatives

Both upward pressure on overall water rates and the need to refine methods for ensuring both that new development pays its way and that the Utility can be responsive to market needs require ongoing adjustment to rates and charges. Critical among these are:

- Establishing a rate stabilization fund.
- Defining Utility Extension Charge (UEC) elements and operating-level reimbursement procedures.
- Completion of needs definition for a long-term system rehabilitation plan and establishing appropriate funding mechanisms to ensure its implementation.
- Instituting appropriate financial incentives for conservation, connection to the existing system in areas already served, and infill development.

New Initiatives to Ensure Administrative Consistency

The AWOMS project and other ongoing efforts are addressing how to update processes and mechanisms in keeping with the opportunities offered by the Internet and other new information management tools. The following tasks have been identified as critical in this area:

- Establish mechanisms and an ongoing program for evaluating and streamlining design and policy review processes.
- Establish a system for issuing approved policies, documents and technical manuals in electronic form so that they can be economically accessed, updated and cross-referenced.
- Compile a comprehensive electronic water policy directory.
- Establish a calendar, personnel assignments and funding for review and update of existing policies and procedures on a periodic (e.g., annual, five-year or ten-year) basis.

Table 1 presents some of the high priority tasks and provides a timeframe for their completion. This balances the urgent need for completion of many of the activities with the reality of constrained budgets and staffing. The target dates are optimistic based on an assumption that this document will receive final adoption (Board - late 2000, City Council - early 2001) and begin implementation immediately after adoption.

TABLE 1. High Priority Tasks and Target Completion Dates

Task	Policy Ref.	Target Date
Initiate on-going stakeholder dialog mechanisms	A.1	2001
Conduct the first stakeholder survey	A.2	2001
Establish a Water Advisory Commission	A.3	2001
Define safe and reasonable service pressures and approaches to achieving them	C.3	2001
Create a separate water and wastewater department	D.1	2001
Complete changes in practices and technology emerging from the AWOMS project	D.2	2001
Establish a rate stabilization fund	E.3	2001
Revise line extension policies	E.5	2001
Define UEC elements and operating-level reimbursement procedures	E.5	2001
Issue the first annual report	A.4	2002
Institute incentives for connection to the system in served areas	B.4	2002
Establish communications channels and personnel assignments for making requirements known well in advance	B.6	2002
Develop operating criteria regarding level of service and system reliability	C.4	2002
Develop a long-term rehabilitation needs and funding program	E.2	2002
Institute stronger financial incentives for conservation	E.6	2002
Compile a comprehensive water policy directory	F.1	2002
Establish a strategy for making centrally updated and cross-referenced policy documents and technical manuals available in electronic form	F.1	2002
Set periodic document review schedule	F.1	2002
Complete updated specification and technical manuals	F.3	2002
Complete a Water Master Plan	F.3	2003
Review the Fundamental Water Service Policies	F.3	2010

APPENDIX I - REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP

A group of community and interest organizations met during the Summer of 2000 to work on the *Draft Fundamental Water Service Policies*. At the conclusion of their efforts, they prepared a report on their findings and recommendations.

REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP
REVIEWING THE

RECOMMENDED FUNDAMENTAL WATER SERVICE POLICIES

AUGUST 2000

INTRODUCTION: This report is made by the Working Group established to review the *Recommended Fundamental Water Service Policies* proposed for adoption by the Albuquerque Metropolitan Area Water and Wastewater Board. In May 2000, the Working Group met for the first time to undertake the task of providing input to the proposed policies. The participants included volunteers from the community who represented various organizations. Because the group was formed in an ad hoc manner, the participants collaborated and shared ideas in an open forum approach. As such, there are no formal recommendations or endorsements of the specific policies made by the Working Group to any reviewing and approval bodies. However, the participants felt it was important to express several opinions about the policies as the document moves forward for adoption.

POSITIVE FEATURES OF THE PROCESS: The Working Group wishes to commend the project manager, the supporting staff, and consultants who facilitated. They did an excellent job of providing feedback in a timely manner, organizing effective meetings to review the policies, and communicating information among the participants. Although the timeframe for providing input by the Working Group was relatively short, all of the participants felt that significant progress was made in a short period of time as a result of the management oversight and the strong and sustained effort of all parties involved.

The participants in the Working Group were encouraged by the changes made to the recommended policies after considerable discussion and input. In the end, the various positions of the participants were not as opposite or distinct as one might expect. **The Working Group wishes to express a general concurrence with the policy document as it currently stands.** While there may be individual differences over specific wording and perspectives expressed in the policies and rationale sections, the Working Group believes that a sound framework has been established.

IMPORTANT REASONS FOR ESTABLISHING THE POLICIES: The Working Group wishes to express a number of important reasons for establishing the policies which include:

- The policies specifically address water-related issues which are vital to our future – our water resources require protection and efficient use for generations to come.
- The policies and their implementation help avoid decisions made in a crisis mode or without the proper framework and understanding of all the key issues.
- The policies address the importance of connecting land use and water service planning.
- The policies interface with planning efforts currently being considered in regards to how our community grows in the future.
- The policies will guide the decision-making of key elected officials in an orderly manner.
- The policies will provide a secure framework to manage, construct, and maintain the water service.
- The policies will insure that past practices and decisions are consolidated in a more orderly, manageable, and predictable way.
- The policies will create an accountability structure for insuring that the required implementation steps are carried out in a timely manner.

IMPORTANT REASONS FOR ADOPTING THE POLICIES IN A TIMELY MANNER: The Working Group believes that the policies should be discussed and approved in a timely manner for the following reasons:

- The Citizens in the metropolitan area are looking to elected officials to be stewards of our natural resources and thus, expect timely implementation of key policies, such as presented in the fundamental policies.
- Timely adoption insures that the metropolitan area can be in charge of its own destiny as the region faces federal and other challenges to the security of our water supply and service policies.
- The complexity and timing of implementation for proposed water supply, management, and service strategies require that these policies be in place to insure that all objectives can be met.
- Future growth in the area requires that sound policies be in place to insure that adequate water service is provided to meet these demands.

WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS: It is estimated that over 130 person hours have been spent in four formal meetings to review the policies. Additionally, a significant amount of personal time was spent by each participant outside the formal meetings to review the material, provide written comments, and coordinate input from the organizations represented. Listed below are the active participants of the Working Group and the organizations represented:

Name	**Organization**
Blair Brown	Sierra Club
Brian Burnett	Economic Forum
Susan Gorman	Sierra Club
Nelson Janes	NM Board of Realtors
Bob Prendergast	Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly
Dennis Roberts	Associated General Contractors
Andy Smith	Community Water Study Group
Howard Stone	National Association of Industrial and Office Properties
Stan Strickman	Trails Management, Inc.
Helen Wright	League of Women Voters

Four other individuals participated in one of the meetings: Perry Denker, Albuquerque Economic Development; Ned Farquhar, 1000 Friends of New Mexico; Will Gleason, State Land Office; and Lora Lucero, New Mexico Chapter American Planning Association.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: The Working Group understands that prior to adoption of the policies the general public must be given an opportunity to provide final comments. It is expected that both individuals and organizations will continue to evaluate the various policies and make suggestions. Elected officials and bodies are urged to balance the need to obtain additional input with the importance of moving ahead with adoption. The Working Group strongly believes that now is the time to move forward with policy adoption and establish an aggressive implementation strategy in which the details of the policies are defined and put into practice. Strong consideration should also be given to the staffing and funding requirements that will insure the policy implementation becomes a reality at the earliest possible time.

The Working Group appreciates the opportunity to have assisted in this capacity and looks forward to providing input and help as the policies are implemented.

APPROVED BY THE WATER POLICIES WORKING GROUP SEPTEMBER 2000

_____	_____
Blair Brown	Brian Burnett
_____	_____
Susan Gorman	Nelson Janes
_____	_____
Stan Strickman	Dennis Roberts
_____	_____
Helen Wright	Howard Stone

APPENDIX II – EFFECT ON WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM EXTENSION POLICIES

The existing Water and Sewer System Expansion Policies (commonly called the Line Extension Policies) as adopted by the Albuquerque City Council (R20-1984, approved 2-28-84) are affected in a major way by adoption of the *Fundamental Water Service Policies*. They will require extensive revision. This Appendix shows many of the changes that will be needed.

CITY/COUNTY SENIOR STAFF STEERING COMMITTEE

Art Stuart, Albuq. Public Works
Barbara Gastian, Albuq. Public Works
Charles Bowman, Albuq. Public Works
Chris Blewett, Bern. Co. Public Works
Curt Montman, Albuq. Environmental Health
Doug Dailey, Albuq. Public Works
Gary Daves, Albuq. Public Works
Greg Olson, Albuq. Public Works
Greg Smith, Albuq. City Attorney's Office
Jean Witherspoon, Albuq. Public Works
Jerry Widdison, Albuq. Public Works
Jessie Molina, Albuq. Fire Dept.
Joel Wooldridge, Albuq. Planning
John Castillo, Albuq. Public Works
John Hartman, Albuq. Public Works
John Stomp, Albuq. Public Works
Kristine Suozzi, Bern. Co. Environmental Health
Laura Mason, Albuq. Council Services
Loren Meinz, Albuq. Public Works
Louis Martinez, Albuq. Public Works
Lou Colombo, Albuq. Council Services
Mary Lou Leonard, Albuq. Environmental Health
Mary Murnane, Bern. Co. Public Works
Matthew O'Grady, Bern. Co. Public Works
Rick Bell, Albuq. Information Systems
Robbie Lopez, Albuq. Public Works
Roger Green, Albuq. Public Works
Roy Robinson, Albuq. Public Works
Sandy Doyle, Albuq. Public Works
Shirley Salvi, Albuq. Planning
Steve Bockemeier, Albuq. Public Works
Susan Kelly, Albuq. Public Works
Tim West, Bern. Co. Public Works

CONSULTANT TEAM

Boyle Engineering Corporation

In Association With

Camp Dresser & McKee Inc. / CH2M Hill / EJJ Communications / Sites Southwest

NATIONAL PEER REVIEW TEAM

Bevin A. Beaudet, PE, Vice President, CH2M Hill, Oakland, CA

Paul R. Brown, Senior Vice President Western Division Manager, CDM, Carlsbad, CA

David W. Rommelmann, PE DEE, Regional Vice President, Boyle Engineering, Denver, CO